

BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS**REGULAR MEETING****Monday, March 11, 2002**

Present: June Bailey, Colleen Craig, Glen Dey, Janet Miller, M.S. Mitchell, Trix Niernberger, Joe Todd

Also Present: Janet Wright and Chris Steincamp – Wichita Festivals, Inc; Wyatt Hoch, Barbara Chamberlin, and John Firsching – Botanica, Inc; Mike North – Law Department; Kathy Dittmer and Lucy Burnett – Riverside Citizens Association (RCA); and Doug Kupper and Maryann Crockett (staff)

President Mitchell called the meeting to order at approximately 3:30 p.m. The minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 11, 2002, were reviewed and approved.

1. **Presentation by Wichita Festivals, Inc.** Director Kupper commented that Wichita Festivals, Inc. (WFI) was expanding their sponsorship of events and would probably be hosting festivals and other activities in addition to the River Festival in the future. He stated that WFI was proposing several ordinance changes that would effect how the City handled WFI sponsored events. He introduced Janet Wright, Executive Director, WFI.

Wright gave a brief background of WFI stating that they were a nonprofit organization established in 1972. She said a 24-member volunteer board governed the organization and that the first Wichita River Festival was held in 1972. She provided board members a packet of information on WFI, its activities, revenues and expenses, economic impact and research study and a draft of the requested ordinance change.

Wright stated that while button sales have declined each year since 1989, the costs associated with sponsoring various festival events have increased. She referred to an historical record of button sales from 1980 to present. It was also noted that over the years, the price of a button has increased from \$1 to \$3. She commented that the proposed ordinance would allow WFI to charge admission to various events, particularly the headliner concert that would most likely take place in South Riverside Park. She said the ordinance would provide WFI more flexibility with their budget in order to fund the organization and keep it operational.

Wright introduced Chris Steincamp. Steincamp commented that they met with Councilman Joe Pisciotte, who suggested that WFI draft an ordinance change for consideration and discussion with the City Law Department and the Park Board.

There was general discussion concerning how the proposed ordinance changed the existing ordinance. It was noted that this was a new addition to the existing ordinance. Mitchell requested clarification as to whether the proposed ordinance limited charging admission to

the discretion of the Park Board. Wright explained that the ordinance gave WFI authority to charge admission to selected events without having to come back to the Park Board on a case-by-case basis. There was discussion concerning the philosophy that all park areas should be open to the general public without having to pay an admission fee. There was also discussion concerning how other user groups may interpret the ordinance change and if they would also request this type of exception. Responding to a question, Mike North commented that the Board could make the ordinance change as limited as they would like; however, he said he did not know if that would fit WFI's request. He also mentioned the change WFI requested to the ordinance governing vendors, particularly around Century II when the food court was in operation.

On motion by Bailey, second by Todd, IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY VOTED to recess into executive session for consultation with legal counsel on matters privileged in the attorney-client relationship and that the Board return from executive session in approximately one-half hour at 4:15 p.m.

The Board returned from executive session at approximately 4:15 p.m.

On motion by Bailey, second by Craig, IT WAS VOTED to table the issue until the next board meeting to give the Law Department and WFI attorneys time to develop a compromise to limit charging admission to a single WFI location or a single WFI event. Motion passed 6-1. Niernberger – No.

2. **Approval of Bids for Grove Park Project.** Director Kupper provided board members a break down of the bids for the Grove Park Project. He briefly reviewed the base bid for roadway paving, parking lots and associated improvements. He commented that the Park and Recreation Department would pay Public Works approximately \$55,000 to oversee and inspect road construction because Public Works project inspectors were not funded from the general fund, but from each project separately. He stated that park staff would oversee construction and renovation of the football fields. He added that the neighborhood group would work on the picnic areas and shelters and assist with providing plant materials for the front entrance.

There was discussion concerning the proposed picnic shelters, fund raising activities, "sweat equity" and additional assistance to be provided by the Kansas National Guard next fall. Dey reported that the neighborhood group would be meeting with the Green Team from Westar to request their assistance with the project. Niernberger clarified that the football fields would be completed prior to installation of additional restrooms. Staff responded that was correct.

On motion by Dey, second by Bailey, IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY VOTED to approve the bid document.

3. **Discussion of Proposed Botanica Expansion into Sim Park.** Barbara Chamberlin, Botanica Executive Director, introduced Wyatt Hoch, President, and John Firsching, Jr., board member. She provided board members a packet of materials that included a copy of Botanica's monthly newsletter, promotional flyers on various garden events and two maps of

the expansion proposal designed by Robert Page, Architect, Department of Landscape Architecture, Kansas State University.

Wyatt Hoch began the presentation by stating that Botanica was seeking the Park Board's approval of the long-range concept to expand the gardens west of the current 9 1/2 acres into Sim Park and south to the river.

John Firsching gave a brief background and history of garden development to-date. He referred to the concept map, stating that it was the eighth proposal drawn for the project. He specifically referred to several design elements, including extending the roadway from the Sim Park picnic area to the garden entry on Amidon St.; the conservatory, which would be approximately one acre under glass; restaurant/café and main building. He also mentioned several garden concepts/themes still in the development stages. He concluded by stating that expansion of the gardens would solidify Botanica's position as a regional and national attraction. He commented that expansion would be completed in phases and that the Botanica Board and long-range planning committee would be holding a retreat in the near future to establish project time lines, set priorities, etc. He added that they would like the Park Board's OK that the expansion project was a viable idea.

Niernberger expressed concern that the gardens were not particularly accessible to working people because they were not open in the evenings. She commented that she felt issues like extended hours and programming geared towards the general public needed to be addressed prior to expansion plans. Chamberlin commented that Botanica was open Tuesday evenings (June through September) and that they would like to expand that to at least two nights a week. She commented that volunteer staffing was a challenge and that evening hours would have to be promoted to encourage people to take advantage of them.

Dey suggested investigating bringing neighborhood groups and other organizations into the gardens or having neighborhoods sponsor garden fairs. He mentioned that the gardens were not easily accessible to many people for economic reasons. There was general discussion concerning several ideas including exploring the possibility of a "free" garden day. Director Kupper also mentioned that the Summer of Discovery program included a trip to Botanica. Chamberlin briefly reviewed Botanica's educational programming and community outreach efforts on ideas like sensory and community gardens.

Niernberger asked how Botanica's expansion plans would fit into the prior discussion concerning charging admission to publicly owned parkland? Director Kupper responded that as a City function Botanica was subject to some type of cost-recovery. Staff mentioned that the City provided approximately 25% of Botanica's overall budget.

Mitchell clarified that there would be public access to the Sim Park picnic area and other picnic areas to be developed along the river. Responding to a question, Chamberlin commented that the proposed expansion was about 23 –24 acres. Director Kupper explained that Botanica had been offered approximately 160 acres by a private donor. He said Botanica was seeking the Park Board's approval for expansion at the present location since a regional and national attraction could not be developed on just 9 ½ acres. He said if the Board did not

feel expansion at the present location was a viable plan, then Botanica needed to explore the idea of possible relocation.

Miller inquired if the expansion proposal had been presented to neighborhood groups for their input. Kathy Dittmer, President, RCA, responded that the RCA Park Use Task Force was aware of the proposal; however, the idea had not been presented to the entire neighborhood association. She said the Park Use Task Force generally agreed with the expansion project. Miller responded that although she was excited about the concept, she would feel more comfortable if the board had some public input prior to endorsing the idea. Bailey suggested that staff check into the deed restrictions before the idea is presented to the District Advisory Boards (DAB's) for public comment.

On motion by Miller, second by Bailey, IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY VOTED that the Board was interested in exploring the expansion proposal; that the idea be presented to various neighborhood groups and DAB VI for public comment and input; and that the expansion issue be re-addressed at the May Board meeting or some future date.

After further discussion, the vote was AMENDED to include a provision that Botanica Staff provide ideas and programming options on how to make the gardens more accessible to the general public and working people specifically.

4. **Reorganization Update.** Director Kupper reported that the department restructure was proceeding on schedule and that staff was "in place". He specifically commented on hiring the two Park and Recreation Superintendents (North and South) and the turf manager.

Director Kupper explained the importance of recreational programming and maintenance functions being consolidated and managed by one supervisor in each division for better service delivery and oversight. He also mentioned that each division had been broken down into regions. He added that some bugs were being worked out, but that was to be expected during any system reorganization. He stated that long-term staff were adapting to new methods of operation successfully. He mentioned areas such as retooling, re-outfitting and re-educating staff; equipment purchases and maintenance schedules; right-of-way mowing and recreation center grounds maintenance. He commented that he felt the quality and timeliness of grounds maintenance had improved and would continue to improve in the future.

There was brief discussion concerning manpower and equipment issues. Director Kupper concluded by stating that the City would be hiring a consultant to measure "acceptable service levels". There was brief discussion concerning the 1992 reorganization where many building services such as restroom sanitation were transferred to the Public Works Department. There was also discussion concerning budget program options such as replacement of gym floors, repair and improvement of park boulevards, roads, hike and bike paths and parking lots, and the addition of updated signage.

5. **Director's Update.** Director Kupper reported briefly on the following items:

- The "bath tub" at Oak Park should be filled with water by April 1.

- CIP Program renovation of parking lots and swimming pools was proceeding as scheduled.
- Staff was corresponding with State staff concerning Land Water and Conservation funds used to renovate Linwood Park.
- Development of Bridgeport Soccer Fields was proceeding as scheduled.
- Programming of youth soccer at Schell Park was underway.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 6:00 p.m.

M.S. Mitchell, President

ATTEST:

Maryann Crockett, Clerk
Recording Secretary